

The Argument vpon the Epistle of S. Paule to Philemon: by Erasmus of Roterodame.



This Philemon (after the Grekes wytyng) was a Whygian bozne, whiche nacton of people is vnteachable a nauyge, as the Grekes ome prouerbe maketh often mencion: Scrypes make the Whygian to amende. And yet Paul reckoned this Philemon one of hys speciall frendes, because of his godlynes a diligence done to y sapites. And a seruaunt of his one Onclimus had runne away fro him to Roma, and had threushipe stolen somewhat from him, as seruauntes are for the moste parte vsed to doe. There whan he had heerde Paule, who at that tyme was in bondes, he receiued the doctrine of the gospel, and serued Paule in prison. But lest the master should be vexed in his mynde for hys seruauntes runnyng awaye, he saureth him home agayne, a with a wonderfull diligence and crueltie, he reconsilereth vnto the Maister hys seruaunt that had bene both, a runnagate and a piker, and offereth him selfe to be swetty to make good what soeuer he had piket at his runnyng awaye. This Epistle he wrote from the prison by the sayd Onclimus whom he also calleth his sonne.

Thus endeth the Argument.

The paraphrase of Erasmus

1516

upon the Epistle of S. Paule to Philemon.

The i. Chapter.

Paule the psoner of Christ & brother Timothee. Wrote Philemon the beloued, and our bettre, and to the beloued Appia, and to Archippus our felowe soulece, and to the congregation that is of thy house. Grace be vnto you and peace from God our father, & from the lord Iesu Christ.

Philem befoze this tyme an spoile and seruante of Iesu Christ and nowe his psoner also: for why shoulde not I be glad to be hys psoner, for whose ghopelles sake I weare these bondes: not for the punishment of any euill that I haue done, but as a notable badge of a free & valiant preacher: and also my felowe ghopellypreacher, brother Timothee, vnto Philemon in the profession of the comyn faith a brother, singularly woerthe to be beloued: and not a brother onely but also my companion in very many affaires & partaker in the office of the gospel: & to his wyfe Appia, my moste welbeloued spker as concerning the kynred of faith: & to Archippus our felowe soulece and to the rest of the congregation whiche is at his house: Grace be vnto you and peace from God our comyn father & fro his sonne the lord Iesu Christ.

I thanke my god, making mentis alwayes of the in my prayers, when I heare of thy loue and faith, whiche thou haste towardes the lord Iesu, and towardes all Captes, in that the fellowship of thy faith is fruitful in the knowledge of truely good (woorde) whiche is in you towarde Iesu Christ. For we haue great ioye and consolation in thy loue: because that by thee (brother) the Captes breces are comforted.

In my prayers wherewith I am accustomed to sacrifice daylye vnto God, I sende thanks vnto him alwayes on thy behalfe. For I ascribe it thankfully vnto him, that I heare spoken openly of all men, that is to say, both the poweresse, & thy ryght gospelling charitie, whiche I beareit towardes the lord Iesus & not towardes hym only, but also towardes all saintes, & is to mete, hys medres vnto whō what so euer is bestowed, hys wyl is to reche it done to hys self. And this I also beseeche him, to augment his mercifulnes vpon thee, & that this thy faith, whiche is not idle in the, may expresse his power dayly more & more, & to enforce the with plenteoulnes to releue me a mo, so I there be no suffice of christen charitie but that thou maye be both acquainted and tried in it. The thynges that thou hast hitherto done already, occasion vs to conceaue a more sure confidence in thee, that we dare be bolde to rechen vpon the in matters of greater woerthe. For when I doe consider that all that Christians haue are comyn, I am not a litle ioyous, and even in these afflictions it was no smal comforte to me, that thou (o my brother) wast so ready to defende well of all men, by meanes of thy loue, wherewith thou hast refreshed the saintes heeres that are afflicted with the sorowes of this worlde. For in thys thy doing thou declarest thy selfe to be a ryght brother.

Wherfore, though I myghte be bolde in Christ to commaunde thee, that whiche was thy dewtye to do: yet for loues sake I rather beseeche the, though I be as I am, such an old man, and now a psoner of Iesu Christ. I beseeche the for my synne wherewith I haue begotten in my bondes (whiche in tyme past was to the unpardonable) but now profitable both to the and to me) whom I haue sent home agayne. Thou therefore reche me, that is to say, wpo e uod beneuole, whom I woulde fere haue retained w
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and, that in thy greue beinght haue ministered vnto me in the bonds of the ghespitt,
reuerentes, without thy saynes woulde I be nothing, that thy good wisshyng good
woult not be as if neede of necessitie, but willingly.

Wherfore hauyng the experience of these so many matters, wherby thou
dearest thy selfe to be a true follower of Christ, I trusted exceedingly, that I
myght obeye of the what I wyl, albeit I commaunded the only, as the fa-
ther his sonne, and as an Apostle his disciple, namely in a matter of it selfe in-
different and agreeable to the gospels doctrine, that thou professest: whiche
commaundeth, that we by experience selvyge the mercye of the Lorde in forge-
myng our debtes, woulde lykewyse forgeue other, yet I had rather to obteyne
this at thine handes by charitie, than by myne auctoritie: and I woulde ra-
ther desire the, as one brother desireth another, than commaunde the as a ma-
ster his scholar. And thou shalt not disdayne suche a desire. For in what
theng canst thou saye me naye that I desire theryea euen I, Iust Paule (whan
I speake of Paule, I meane matre vnto the that are not small) than an olde
man. And muche is wonte to be graunted to a man for his age sake. But thys
geare is no noueltie to the, And nowe also a prisioner. And in making of de-
sires euen the mischance of the beseker hath no small weight. I ast of al, I am the
prisioner of Christe Iesu. And to suche a prisioner all ought to breake their fa-
uour that professe the doctrine of Christe. To a man that desireth by so manye
wayes thou couldest not saye nay, although he woulde entreate the for anye
man. But nowe I entreate thee for my sonne, whom I loue so muche the more
tenderly, that I begate him not vnto wholes, but vnto Christ, not to the world
but to the ghespitt: yea and I begate hym in my bondes nowe whan I shall
shortly goe out of this world. For parentes are wonte to loue their chyldren
more into vobely, whom they begate in their extrenne olde age. This is curi-
ousnes, that in tymes past whan he had robbed his mayster runne awaye
frome hym, litell agreeably to hys owne name, that is to wete, profitable and
fruitful, nowe is cleane chaunged into an other sort, and that not only be trusty
for thy profyte hereafter, but also he was profitable to me wyth hys securyce in
prison. Therfore I sende him to the home agayne, for nowe he is become an o-
ther man. And yf thou be the man, that I trust thou art: and yf olde Paule the
prisoners commendacion standeth of anye effecte with the, thou shalt receyue
Onesimus, not nowe as a runnagate seruant, but as the thynges that I let
moste stonde by, and my singularly welbeloued sonne. It is agaynst my wyl
that I sende him home agayne. For I had rather kepe him still with me, if it
were but for this cause, that he woulde represent thee vnto me in these bondes.
For I doubt not, but inasmyche as thou thyselfe so muche charitie towardes
all others for the ghespittes sake, thou wouldest in case thou were here, minis-
ter also to me in these bondes, wherewith I am tyed for the ghespittes sake. But
nowe he is founde vnsought for, by whom thou mayest minister vnto me be-
yng absent thy selfe. Wherbeit I woulde do nothing without thine aduise, lest
yf in doing myne auctoritie I shoulde do it vpon myne owne head, although he
thou wouldest haue taken my dede in good parte, yet thy well doinge shoulde
haue the lesse commendacion, yf it seemed to be toynd with anye necessitie. Now
I sent hun home agayne, so as it maye be in the choysse either to kepe hym still
with the, or to sende him to me agayne. Yf thou sende him agayne, the doinges
shall haue so muche the more prayse, in that it is not enforced but freely done

end of thyne owne mynde.

For happily he that fees departed for a season, that then cometh. see him for ever, see now as a seruant: but about a seruant, euen a brother beloued, specially to me: but how much more into the, both in flesh, & also in spirit: If I coulde me therfore a scrow, because hym as my selfe. If he had done the any hurt, or worth the ought, I saye to my charge, (I shall haue wylle if I mine own hand) I wyl receyue it. And I do not saye so, how I thou owed unto me euen thus thou sette also. And so (brother) let me enjoye the in spirit. Restore my bondes in the lord. & resting in thyn obedience, & wot unto the, knowing I thou wyl also do more for I say, my prayer, praye me lodging: for I trust I shall see the helpe of your prayer, & shall be geuen unto you. Ther salute the, Epaphras my fellowe prisoner in Christ Jesus, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my beloued. & the grace of our lord Iesu Christe be with your spirit. Amen.

The xxvij.

Does not thinke vpon his running away. He hath recompensed the fault of his fleeing with his wel doying, he hath washed it away by baptysme, he hath done it away w' teares. And how woortest I whether it come so to passe by I dispensation of Gods prouidence, I his fault might turne to good both to vs & to him. The iudgements of god be secret. Perchaunce he was for this purpose taken away frod thee for a season, I for a seruant being but for a season (for bonde seruant indurthe no longer than for terme of tyme) thou mightest receyue him for ever. It is for ever whatsoeuer the gospel bringeth forth, & that I shouldest receyue him agayne now not as a bond seruant but as a most deere brother. Truly vnto me that am an Apostle, he is bothe a brother and most deere beloued brother, for the commune faithes sake, which maketh vs like in Christ: for the commune inheritaunce sake, wherunto we are called indifferently like: for the commune fathers sake, for the commune redemers sake, in whiche all there is no difference betwene the lord and the seruant, betwene the maister and the scholar. And yf he for these causes be vnto me most dearely beloued, w' whome I haue nothing commune sauing the kered of the spirit, how much more ought he to be most dearely beloued vnto the, vnto whom besides the bondes of the spirit, he is also toynd aiter I flesh. Thou wouldest loue a stranger, if thou seest him become suche a one as Quisimus is. But nowe thou wylte loue him for this respecte that wher he is of thine owne household, he is proued suche a one as he is. And yf thou vouchsafest to haue me to be thy companion in the gospels affaires, thou must take him agayne as it were I my selfe. For I loue him as my most deere soue, as my highly beloued brother, & as partaker of my bondes and of the gospel. Other thou must cast of both or heertly loue both. What he hath bene afore tyme, it besmeth not to reherse aiter he is baptised. Suppose him to be a newe man newly doyne agayne vnto the. But if the losse of any thing greue the, wherof thou wouldest haue amedes, before thou forgeue hym take me swette for him. Requyre it of me, whatsoeuer he hath eithet hurt thee or oweth thee. I vnde my fidelitie vnto the by this my hande wyltyng. Doe thou haue this Epistle wrytten with my verye owne hande. Yf thou thinke me a reuylde suetic, leaue Quisimus alone, goe to lawe with me, I shall paye the agayne in his behalfe, whatsoeuer he oweth the. Thus muche I coulde obteyne (I thinke) yf I had to do with any other man. I am not disposed to reherse at this present, what I might iustly require of the by myne owne autoritie. For I wyl not make reherfall here, that inasmuch as thou arte become a christian man by my doctrine, thou owest me not only that that thyne is, but also thine owne selfe. Suche lesse wrong thou oughtest to

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rethen it, yf I wolde requyre the to forgyue me, what soeuer losse it be that
Quelinus oweth thee, howbeit I desyre not that, oules thou wilt wplyngly
and of thyne owne mynde forgyue it, not so muche to set my promise at libertie,
as that thou shouldest declare thy charitie. Wei goe to my brother Quelinus
hath his name of fructon, who, lyke as I loue hym detely, and as I wolde
with al myne hert haue him praysed vnto the, so let it be my chaunce to haue
fructon of thee, not after the maner as among the commune people, a frend is
glad of his frende, but so as an Apostle is ioyous of his disciple that expresth
the doctrine of Christ. Thou seest how hartely I loue Quelinus, and he hath
wel deserued that I should loue hym. Therfore receyue hym, & make my herte
mery. Heren I trouble the with to muche a doe, not that I put any dilens in
thy charitie, but I do it vpon a certayne abundaunce of loue that I beare vnto
my souerayn. For in dede I knowe thyne obedience so thourghlye well by thron
olde diligent doynge, that I doubt not but thou wilt doe moze in this behalfe
than I requyre of the. And in the meane whyle receyue Quelinus gentlie euē
as my pledge, and also prepare me lodgyng agaynst I come, whiche shall not
be long after. For I trust that God thourgh thy prayers wil ouer restore me
agayne vnto you. And than I shall presently thanke the for thy gentyl recey-
uyng of Quelinus. Epaphras thy countreyman saluteth thee, whiche is
my felow in pryson and in bondes, for Christ Iesus sake. Also prouer
Marcus Aristarchus, Demas, & Lucas, my felowes in office. And
imagine that they all beseeche the for Quelinus as I doe.
The grace of oure Lorde Iesus Christ be alwayes
wth your spirite: Amen.

Thus endeth the Paraphrase vpon the
Epistle to Philemon